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ABSTRACT

This document is the transcript of a weekly radio "magazine" program devoted to coverage of news, features, policy, and people in the field of education. Discussion topics include: (1) reasons for becoming a teacher; (2) characteristics of a good teacher; (3) a listener's letter on a bad teacher; (4) remamberances of best and worst teachers; (5) a letter about a sixth-grade teacher; (6) a minister talks about his favorite teacher; (7) sexism in teaching discussed by women teachers from Buffalo, New York; (8) a teacher who had been raped; (9) two retired teachers remember good times; and (10) the everyday woes of teachers. (MM)

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INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
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A PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER

Program #62 January 24, 1977

Options in Education

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 185 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Acting Producer is JoEllyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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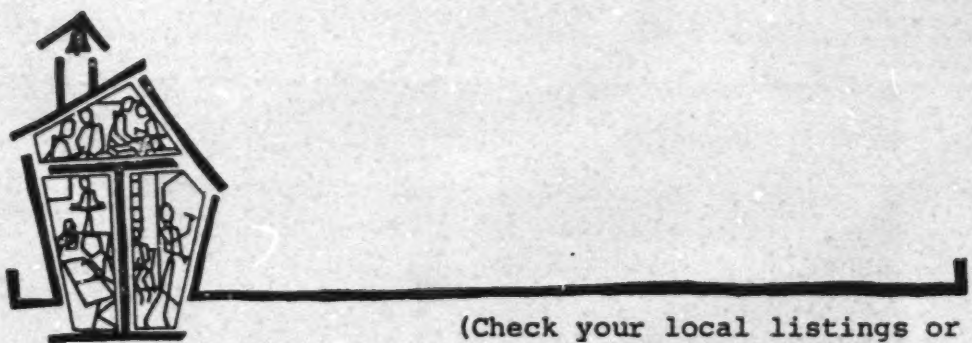

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"A PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN TEACHER"

GITE: "Let's play a little game, okay? I'll give you a description of someone, and you fill in the blank. I'm happy, sad, white, tall, black, short, concerned, pleasant, evil, poor, wealthy, brown, I speak, I write and I read. What am I? You don't know? Teachers!"

"Now, some people say a teacher is made out of steel --
But a teacher's made of stuff that can think and feel --
A mind and a body and a tortured soul,
The ability to teach the shy and the bold.

I teach 42 kids, and what do I get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
St. Peter, don't you call me to that Heavenly Gate --
I owe my soul to the youth of the state.

I was born one morning, it was cloudy and cool --
I picked up my register and walked to the school.
I wrote 42 names on my class roll
My superintendent said, "Well, bless my soul!"

42 kids and what do I get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
St. Peter, don't you call me to that Celestial Shore --
I got 42 students and they're sending me more!"

(PETE SEEGER)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: And I'm John Merrow.

BLAIR: John, do you remember any of your teachers?

MERROW: Sure. Everybody remembers some of their teachers. If you went to school when I did, Wendy, you spent more time with your teacher than you did watching TV.

BLAIR: That's not true today, but still, a child spends 12,000 hours in school -- and a lot of that time, of course, is spent with the teacher.

MERROW: But you know, I never <u>really</u> knew my teachers. I never knew their first names, or what they did in their spare time -- or even why they became teachers.

BLAIR: This week -- and for the next 2 weeks, as well -- we're going to try to find out just who's teaching our children, whether they're qualified, how they spend their day, and why they became teachers in the first place.

TEACHER: "I guess I could say that I became a teacher because it was really the only avenue opened up ..."

TEACHER: "As far as I can remember, I always wanted to be a teacher, and I would do it again if I had the chance."

TEACHER: "Well, I came into teaching because the other avenue that I was interested in just didn't seem to be as available."

TEACHER: "I've been in the teaching profession for 24 years, so it has to be because I like doing it."

TEACHER: "Most kids admire firefighters and police officers, but I've always had a respect and an admiration for teachers."

TEACHER: "I teach because I didn't get to be a foreign correspondent, and go around to solve all the world's problems."

TEACHER: "I think I teach because I enjoy being involved in a profession that is respected by society."

TEACHER: "The reason I teach is because of the fact I was prepared for it, and something I look forward to doing."

TEACHER: "Because I feel that there's a need for good teachers."

TEACHER: "I think it was because when I was growing up, girls that went to college became teachers -- and I can remember from being a very little girl, everybody always said, 'Oh, Paula's so good with children!' -- and I don't remember it ever being an alternative. I just ... that's just ... I don't ever remember making a conscious decision. I wouldn't do it again if I had that decision."

REPORTER: "What would you rather be doing?"

TEACHER: "I'd like to be a member of the State Legislature of South Carolina at this point."

TEACHER: "I teach because I'm good at it."

TEACHER: "Well, I think some where down the line, I arrived at the conclusion that I was born a teacher."

"Welcome back, your dreams were your ticket out --
Welcome back to that same old place that you laughed about ...
Well, the names have all changed since you hung around --
But those dreams have remained, and they've turned around.
Who'd a thought they'd lead you,
Back here where we need you?
Yea, we tease him a lot 'cause we got him on the spot,
Welcome back -- welcome back, welcome back, welcome back!"

(THEME FROM "WELCOME BACK KOTTER", sung by John Sebastian)

MERROW: Although that may tell us something about why people decide to become teachers, it really doesn't tell us who they are.

BLAIR: Some statistics might help that. There are, all together, about 2.2 million teachers in our public schools. Over half -- about 65% of them -- are women, and 90% are white. Teachers earn an average of $12,500 a year -- and the average starting salary is about $4,000 less than that. Eighty percent of teachers belong to unions, making teachers the most heavily unionized public employees in the country.

MERROW: In this program, we'll be talking to teachers, former teachers, students and former students -- and we hope we'll bring some life to those statistics.

BLAIR: One problem with statistics is that they don't tell us what

distinguishes a good teacher from a bad one. What makes one teacher better than another?

WOMAN: "I think the most important thing a teacher has to have is a sense of humor, and the ability to laugh at oneself -- and also be somewhat of a ham actor."

MAN: "In a word, I think the answer is 'honesty'."

CHILD: "Somebody who is nice and who understands kids."

WOMAN: "Enthusiasm!"

WOMAN: "Dedicated to the profession."

CHILD: "Also, to be strict."

CHILD: "I'm not really sure."

STUDENT: "The most important thing is to get you ready for seventh grade, and so you know what it's gonna be like going to a different school."

STUDENT: "My ... how should I put this? I should probably say most dramatically, that my French Lit teacher prevented me from suicide. How does that sound?"

CHILD: "I think they should be, like, really fair -- and they should push you so you ... you ... that you don't drop off. Like, you don't let go."

WOMAN: "A teacher was a good teacher if she went out and she bought material for the windows -- you know, curtains, and put up curtains, and you had flowers; growing plants all over -- you had a big aquarium, and you know, there was a lot of housekeeping to that. The rooms ... a teacher was graded on how attractive her room was."

WOMAN: "People don't seem to feel as dedicated to this profession as they used to be. But certainly, if you go into it, you ought to be a dedicated person. Next to the home, the school is really -- the teacher is the most important influence in their lives."

WOMAN: "Now, the teachers that I have known, and have been successful teachers -- are those who have been enthusiastic; they have been careful to study their community environment, as well as the children -- and they know their own situation so that they can bring a child up from the level where you find him, to a little bit higher level -- and that's the goal of teaching."

MERROW: Later in the program, we'll be hearing from you -- your opinions about your teachers; good and bad.

BLAIR: Right. And for the past few weeks, we've been asking you to write us about your best and worst teacher. We'll be reading some of your letters later.

MERROW: When we say "good teacher", we probably mean innovative and effective. Teachers have their own ideas about the meaning of those terms.

TEACHER: "I think, really, that it's of paramount importance that every teacher ask himself or herself from time to time, 'Am I doing what I want to be doing?' And I

really think that many of us find ourselves in ruts, and we really don't question them. So I think that that question is important: 'Do I really want to be doing this?' Because if the answer is 'No', then I think you're in big trouble, and probably your students are, too. Presuming that that answer is affirmative, I suggest that then there are one or two other three questions you ought to ask yourself of an immediately more germane issue, and perhaps on the way to work, I think you might want to ask yourself before you go in, 'What am I going to do in class today? What is what I'm going to do in class today good for -- and how do I know?' And I think if you ask yourselves those questions; I think if you pasted them on to your dashboard or put them in a corner of the bathroom mirror, and really asked yourself those questions -- probably, your instruction would benefit from it, because it seems to me that sometimes you would come up with answers you don't like. I know I do, and it would seem to me that perhaps more than really dealing with the question of what it is you're teaching, you may indeed find yourself with the question of how you're teaching it."

TEACHER: "The question is 'What makes an effective and innovative teacher?' -- and that question itself may be read in many different ways. If the question is understood to be, 'What causes an effective and innovative teacher?' -- then, I think the answer is primarily 'The teacher -- him or herself.' Nobody is born a teacher, it seems to me. One must work at it, and that means that one must value the satisfactions that come as a teacher. The satisfactions that one experiences as a teacher are different from the satisfactions that one experiences as a researcher. One has to appreciate those. One has to be willing to work to cultivate them in the same way that one must work to cultivate the satisfactions of research. Secondly, there is no way to ignore the fact that an environment must be established in which teaching is rewarded. People do not simply grow up and mature in a discipline, wanting to be teachers. People have to be encouraged to be teachers; they have to be rewarded for teaching excellence. Teaching excellence has to be an integral part of their professional advancement. You might also look at this question as asking, 'What is the raw product of an effective and innovative teacher?' I think two things. One -- expertise. I think there's no way to avoid the fact that you must have something worth teaching. But, secondly -- and this is something that we have less within our own power -- I think part of the raw product of effective teaching is having challenging and innovative students. Next, you might understand the question, 'What makes an effective teacher?' to mean 'What is essential to an effective and innovative teacher?' And in a word, I think the answer is 'honesty.' Now, that's such a big word that it doesn't mean very much -- but let me try to suggest what I mean by that. I think an effective teacher is one who is willing to admit when he or she does not know. There is nothing more frustrating in the learning situation than to have somebody pretend to have knowledge, and to try to force that ignorance upon another human being. If one does not know, it is far more conducive to the learning experience to admit that one does not know."

BLAIR: That discussion was recorded for OPTIONS IN EDUCATION by John Emery of Member Station WMEH in Orono, Maine. A listener in Ohio would agree with that last statement about honesty and the need to acknowledge mistakes. How about reading that letter, John?

MERROW: "I was a bright kid, and all the guidance counselors would point to my academic record and my standardized test scores when they had to defend the bizarre things that they did in the name of education. The specific incident was this:

"While studying civics, Mr. Wood covered the Whiskey Rebellion. I vividly recall his statement that 'The Whiskey Rebellion was entirely a local uprising. The farmers who lived in this area were angry about taxes, and that they couldn't take their product to market whenever they wanted -- but it was only a minor problem for the federal government."

"Well, that is what Wood said. I was interested in history at the time, and I had read a few works about the Whiskey Rebellion, and Mr. Wood's statement didn't seem to make much sense to me. I went home that night, and re-read the information that I had available -- and it confirmed the fact that the Whiskey Rebellion was a serious threat to national stability in the infancy of our nation.

"The next day, I asked Mr. Wood: 'Could you explain what you meant when you said that the Whiskey Rebellion was entirely a local problem? I've been reading about it -- and the book says something different!'

"You'll just have to take my word that I was really excited about the fact that maybe Mr. Wood was smart enough to have analyzed the situation, and maybe he <u>really</u> knew something more than the books I had been reading. I had had scant chance to be involved in any real intellectual endeavor while in this school, and I was eagerly awaiting a cool, rational assessment of the event -- and why he said what he said.

"I was disappointed. Mr. Wood asked me to stand up, which I did. Then, he looked me straight in the eye -- puffed up his chest in an aggressive manner, which frightened the hell out of me, and said, 'When I say that something is true, it is true because I have said so! You are not to question what I say. You are to accept it, memorize it, and learn from it. I am the teacher here because I am smarter than you, and I have gone to school longer than you. Now, get up in front of the class, and bend over!' Mr. Wood then proceeded to paddle me for being 'insubordinate.'"

TEACHER: "One of the worst experiences a kid can have is to be singled out. 'Cause usually, when they're singled out in primary or secondary school, it's for something embarrassing -- either for performing extraordinarily well, which often embarrasses kids -- to be singled out among their peers for that, or singled out because they've done something inept. But to be singled out seems to be something they don't want."

TEACHER: "There was just about universal agreement in my classes this morning that two qualities -- characteristics -- are absolutely essential, and one of the two deals with the question of singling people out. Every student felt that one of the major problems with instructors, when there were problems, was that the instructor tended not to respect them as a person, put them down, was condescending, and that they really felt that it destroyed instantly any kind of learning environment that might exist in that classroom. I might add that the other point that they were just about universally agreed on is the opposite side of that coin. They felt that the greatest quality that effective teaching rests on is enthusiasm."

BLAIR: We've been asking lots of friends and neighbors lately about their teachers, and the memories seem difficult to restrain. John sat down recently with Susan Stamberg and Bob Edwards, the co-hosts of NPR's ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.

SUSAN STAMBERG & BOB EDWARDS

MERROW: Let's swap stories. Let's tell stories about the worst and the best, or the experiences we've ever had in school, or the worst and the best teachers we ever had -- and I'll set you one and see if you can top it. How would that be?

STAMBERG: Yes.

MERROW: The worst experience I ever had was with my third grade teacher -- who is dead, by the way, now -- she used to check our hands, our fingernails and our breath every morning. We'd walk into class, and she'd stand right there, and we had to breathe on her, and if we hadn't brushed our teeth, she would give us a black star, which she'd put on a chart on the wall. And if we had cow manure, or something like that, under our fingernails, we would get another black star.

STAMBERG: Where is this?

EDWARDS: Where in the world did you go to school?

STAMBERG: Yes!

MERROW: This was in Noroton, Connecticut, which used to be a little farm town; it's now a town of advertising executives. So ...

STAMBERG: Did it work?

MERROW: Do I brush my teeth every day -- and I wash my hands 27 times a day?

EDWARDS: You said she's dead now.

STAMBERG: She was no dummy!

MERROW: She was no dummy! Yes ... Susan ... let's hear from you. What was the worst thing that ever happened?

STAMBERG: This is a terrible story, and it doesn't have to do with me, but as -- the older I get, the more I realize it did have to do with me. I don't know if I can name her name, 'cause I ... she ... I don't know if she's alive or not. But she was a teacher in the seventh grade at P.S. 54 --had to be New York City; that's where the "P.S.'s" are -- it was called Booker T. Washington Junior High School. She was our homeroom teacher, and the further away I get from the story, the more I realize what a terribly sick and psychotic woman she was. But she was ours for an entire year!

She picked on one kid in the class -- this skinny, pale, wan, pathetic young man named Paul, who never had his homework in on time -- always had dirty fingernails, you know, his shirt was never tucked in, and he never knew the answers to things. And somehow, he got to her, you know -- he just must have touched some chord in her. She would make him stand up from the back of the room where he was sitting, every day for a year, and she would absolutely take him apart! She would say, "You are a pimple on the face of humanity!"

MERROW: She'd really say that?

STAMBERG: She said that! I wouldn't remember that phrase, you know, from the seventh grade -- but it got engraved into my mind. She would take him apart -- "You're a nothing! You're less than nothing -- a

nameless nothing! You're stupid, you're slovenly, you're ..."

MERROW: Why would she humiliate?

STAMBERG: I can't imagine! I can't imagine! And ... maybe the first time she did it, we all, you know, sort of sat there with our eyes open and our mouths hanging out, and thinking, "Good heavens, she's got to be kidding!", you know ... it's gonna ... she had a sense of humor, poor thing, and we figured that it'd end up being some kind of a joke. It never ended up being a joke -- and it went on day after day, and each time, you know, you'd know what was gonna happen -- and sure enough, it did! There was old Paul, standing up in the back, and there was Mrs. X standing up in the front, going after him.

MERROW: Well, Susan, how did you react to that -- when you were in that classroom?

STAMBERG: Well, you know, you just ... you look down, you put your head underneath the desk, and you look away, and you cover your eyes, and you can't ... that's what I mean when I say to you that it comes back to haunt me now. I feel so incredibly responsible for having allowed that to happen! But you know, when you're in the seventh grade, how old is that? Ten? Eleven years old? You're scared of authority figures, you don't know enough to stand up and say, "You wretch! Cut it out!" -- you know -- "This is terrible! You're destroying this kid." And he, too, was such a quiet little thing, and I'm sure he never -- he was too scared to go home and tell his mother -- "Hey, this is what's going on." We were too scared and intimidated and frightened -- and that bothers me enormously -- to go home and tell our mothers that this was going ... so, somewhere there was a complicity to it, you know? Somewhere ... we allowed this to happen! We let it go on!

MERROW: Well, I don't think you should feel all that responsible -- you were in seventh grade.

STAMBERG: Well, I feel terrible for it.

EDWARDS: I was thinking in my school, there would have been great benevolence, you know.

MERROW: Uh oh, Father Edwards!

EDWARDS: I mean, not a hand was laid on him, right?

STAMBERG: No.

EDWARDS: Well?

STAMBERG: Nothing ...

MERROW: What happened in Louisville, Kentucky, Bob?

EDWARDS: Well, in the parochial schools anywhere -- it's virtually the same, I would imagine. At least, it was when I was growing up. The nuns and whatever else teaches in parochial school -- sometimes brothers and priests ------ iron discipline. It's very authoritarian. It's beyond authoritarian, I think; it's Nazis, I don't know! Discipline is the most highly prized value. It's not like ... well, it's the antithesis, I guess, of the New York Public School today, as it's described to me. But the nuns were like drill instructors.

MERROW: Give me some specific examples.

EDWARDS: I felt like they were sergeants.

STAMBERG: Tell about Rocky!

EDWARDS: Well, there was Rocky, yes -- I've told Susan about Rocky. Rocky was built like a ... Rocky was big. Rocky was very big, and she ... her name ...

MERROW: This is Sister Rocky?

EDWARDS: It's a nun, yeah. And she ... her name ... her nun name was close to that of Rocky Marciano, and she certainly inspired that image in us, and she would belt you. Most of them would, but she ... you knew it when she hit you.

MERROW: With what? Her hand? Fist? Ruler?

EDWARDS: Hand ... yeah ... fist ... whatever. But usually her fist.

MERROW: Well, what had you done to get hit?

STAMBERG: For what, though, yeah ... for what?

EDWARDS: Anything!

MERROW: Like what?

EDWARDS: Ever hear the Robert Klein record, "Child of the Fifties"? "No talking! No talking!" That's what we got all the time -- for talking, for looking out the window, for not knowing your lessons, for ...

STAMBERG: For doing a wrong answer?

EDWARDS: For being a kid!

> "In the education department, they had these, sort of, older women who had gone to Normal School in 1899, graduated in 2 years, took religion and first aid. They gave them each a bun in the back -- a chignon -- and a large black dress and Boy Scout shoes, sent them into schools to say, 'No talking! No talking! Button your lips! No talking!' And of course, you folded your hands in front of you, and you were ready to learn. No tension. 'No talking!'"
>
> (FROM "CHILD OF THE FIFTIES" by Robert Klein)

MERROW: Let's talk about the other side of it. By the way, we've gotten letters from listeners with their own horror stories.

EDWARDS: I'm sure!

MERROW: But we've also gotten a lot of letters about absolutely inspiring men and women, who, you know, made a real difference in the lives of people -- and it seems to me that you could argue that it's ... teachers have more impact on young kids than do parents. I mean, oftentimes, my son or daughter will tell me something is right. Why? Because the teacher said it was right!

STAMBERG: Uh huh ...

MERROW: And even if I can demonstrate in a dictionary, in an encyclopedia that the teacher made a mistake, or that my child misunderstood, the child will say, "No, that's what the teacher said!" And there's this absolute faith.

STAMBERG: I found that to be especially true during my teen years in high school, and I think that's a time when you're so vulnerable, anyway, you know. Being a teenager is hell, and there's a whole lot going on that you need help, sort of, sorting out -- and then, at the High School of Music and Art in New York City, we had an extraordinary teacher named Dr. McCloud, who is now dead, who taught a course in English Literature, and I've had really an amazing -- and as I think of it now -- absolutely gifted premise to it. He just was so sensitive to what our needs must have been at that time. Each day we would read poetry, or important -- very important, sort of classic works -- and he would ask us then to go home each evening and write a journal -- keep a journal, daily, of ideas or thoughts that we've had that had been inspired by whatever the poem of the day had been. And that represented the most incredible release, you know, for all of us to be able to crystalize -- we could be as personal as we liked, and very often, it was nothing really more than a diary, you know -- it stopped being a journal, and became highly personal. But even then, it focused; it meshed for us what education was supposed to be -- what poetic thought was supposed to be, and how that related in a way to our lives and the kinds of things we were going though. And everybody in that class, to this day when we see one another, talks about Dr. McCloud, and remembers that we still have the journals!

MERROW: That's marvelous ... that's marvelous.

STAMBERG: Yeah ... yeah.

"An English teacher, an English teacher --
If only you'd been an English teacher!
We'd have a little apartment in Queens,
You'd get a summer vacation, and we would know what
life means ...

A man who's got his Masters is really someone!
How proud I'd be if you had become one!
It could have been such a wonderful life --
I could have been Mrs. Peterson --
Mrs. Albert Peterson, Mrs. Phi Beta Kappa Peterson --
The English teacher's wife."

BLAIR: Here's a letter from Charlie McGuire in Minneapolis, about his sixth grade teacher in New York State.

MERROW: "I was a farmer's son, going to school in town. I never really fit into that sixth grade class. Kids were always making jokes about the manure on my shoes -- and I couldn't really fight back. Living on the farm, I had no other kids to interact with. My talent then -- as now -- happens to be singing. I remember that the first black man I ever saw was doing his student teaching in my class that year. I can't recall his name, but he was very articulate, and must have had a difficult time being the first black teacher in our school.

"Once or twice a week, this student-teacher would sing to us. He had a great voice, and our favorite song that he sang was the then-popular hit, "High Hopes." We'd sing this song over and over. I discovered not only did I like to sing, but I was astonished that one man could hold a whole audience spellbound just singing to them. I felt a kinship with that man because he was different, and did not fit in -- just like me -- and yet, he used music to close that gap; to bring us all together. "High Hopes" became our theme song that year.

"Next time you fall with your chin on the ground,
there's a lot to be learned,
So look around!
Just what makes that little old ant -
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant?

Anyone knows an ant can't - move a rubber tree plant! But he's got high hopes! He's got high hopes!"

("HIGH HOPES" sung by Frank Sinatra, from the movie, A HOLE IN THE HEAD)

REVEREND SAMUEL PROCTOR

PROCTOR: There's a lady in a little school in Somerset named Miss Mason. Do you know that every black family in Somerset raises particular hell if their children don't study under Miss Mason? If you've got a fourth grade child, then the most wonderful thing that could happen to you is to have a black child come under Miss Mason.

Miss Mason takes no foolishness off anybody. Miss Mason makes everybody know that he is equal to everybody else. And my little raggedy Stevie comes in the house, smelling like a billy goat, and won't bathe and won't clean his teeth and won't comb his hair and won't wash his face -- but I'll tell you what he will do. He'll get Miss Mason's work!

You should see that little rascal grabbin' his books, and climbin' up on top something, and turning down the television and running to the dining room table. What's he so busy about? It's almost time to go to bed, and he hasn't got Miss Mason's work yet.

And then one day, he gets all shined up. "Where you goin'?" "Miss Mason is takin' the class out to her farm today." "What's out there?" "Oh, daddy, she's got some fish. She's got some goats!" "How often?" "Oh, we go out there anytime. Miss Mason has school out there. She gets parents to volunteer, takes them on out to the country."

She's the most marvelous person, and let me tell you something. What she does for them in the fourth grade lasts them right on through! I think in the high school, if we could brag about a person like this for every black child, my soul -- what a difference we could make in the statistics goin' up and down in whatever avenue of our common life.

But contrary-wise, we got a bunch of sissies on a faculty who brag about the fact that they can't do nothin' with the colored! A lot of lazy folk who happen to find out what somebody's test score was the year before, so he says, "Thank God, I don't have to be bothered with them! It's been already proven that they're stupid!"

We need to create a new standard for teaching, and put as much emphasis on trying to turn a teacher on as we do tryin' to grade and track and test and sort, to be sure we don't have teaching to do."

MERROW: The Reverend Samuel Proctor, Minister of the Abbyssinian Baptist Church in New York City.

BLAIR: Even if they're not all "Miss Masons", most teachers -- especially in elementary school -- are women. It hasn't always been that way.

KATHY LEWIS

TEACHER: According to statistics, in 1840, for example -- 61% of public school teachers were male, and by 1865, only 14% were men. And then, by 1905, only 2% were men teachers. Well, what were some of the causes of the feminization of the teaching profession? I think this has to be linked with the huge expansion of the number of children in school. This is the period in which compulsory education laws got passed, and suddenly, many, many children were gonna be in school for many, many years -- it would cost too much to have men teaching all these children. Women could be paid about half the salary of men -- and they were --

with the idea that they were not really supporting a family; they were simply working for pin money.

LEWIS: Well, did a woman's position as a teacher in school in the 19th Century reflect her position in society?

TEACHER: Yes, I think it definitely did. First, she was subordinate, as you pointed out, to a man. A man ran the school -- a man was the principal, and she took orders. I think secondly, this idea that she is a natural teacher because her role is to nurture and take care of children -- so this was considered okay for a woman to do. It was non-threatening to anybody else in the society.

LEWIS: Well, was the feminization of the teaching force more than just desirable -- but also a necessity, in that men were leaving the profession for more lucrative opportunities?

TEACHER: Oh, I'm not sure. I think that might have been the case -- at least the big American myth, if not the reality, in these days -- was that if you worked hard, and I guess, were male, you could become a millionaire. And people knew that teaching, traditionally, was a poorly paid job. If you think about the teachers in literature; the teachers, say, in an Ichabod Crane kind of story -- even the male teacher was a male who couldn't do much else very well; he was a ne'er-do-well; he was a man whose farm had failed -- who'd failed as a shopkeeper, and this was the last-ditch kind of stand for him. So, if anything else more desirable would turn up, I think a man would be likely to take it.

LEWIS: Yeah, but I think also, that probably the number of men teaching didn't go down absolutely -- the percentage -- you're going through a period of enormous school expansion, and that also where men of position in the teaching force changes relatively; that is, from the primary school into the secondary school, and then from the secondary school into the higher education. It's a different bag. I don't think the absolute numbers went down

TEACHER: Yeah. I think there's another aspect to this feminization. A part of it has to do with the purpose of schooling. Schooling in the old days was a way of teaching you a few basic skills -- perhaps, so you could read the Bible and save your soul. By the 19th Century, school was considered a substitute for family, and the socialization role. The idea of school is teaching proper morals and proper behavior. School as a substitute for parents who were not doing what they were supposed to do -- became important. And in this sense, then, the woman in the school is a substitute for the mother at home, who perhaps, was not at home -- or at least in the eyes of school authorities -- was not doing what she was supposed to be doing.

LEWIS: It's a substitute for the immigrant mother and the working-class mother.

TEACHER: Right. And these were the new populations that, to a large extent, public schools were set up to serve. And to the immigrant, at least, it was very prestigious-- because, as a youngster, their first contact with the real America was the schoolteacher. And I've read figures about surveys taken among immigrant school children: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And "teacher", of course, is a very, very popular choice.

LEWIS: Jill, what has your experience been in your present position in the Buffalo Public School system with adapting to roles -- and if you don't adapt to these certain roles, you know, how are you treated? What are reactions by your peers, by supervisors and by the administration?

TEACHER: I think one of the problems -- one of the basic problems that teachers are constantly confronted with; the school system being

the way it is, and serving the function that it's meant to serve -- is one of control in the classroom, and here's where it's said that a woman cannot control a class as well as a man can. And particularly in the elementary schools, I've seen that those students that are supposed to be 'bad' students, or the toughest to handle -- it's said, 'Well, give them to the man teacher rather than have the woman teacher have them.' A lot of that -- there's no question it's just a myth, because anyone that's taught knows that some women can handle classes well, and some women can't -- just like some men can and can't."

LEWIS: "Let's say on the high-school level, which is, you know, the level that you teach. Are there certain expectations that women students -- girls -- have of you as a woman teacher?"

TEACHER: "Yeah. Sure ... I'd be kind of hard put to really, you know, tell you in detail what they are. I can pick one thing, though. The women that I have in my classes find it very difficult to understand -- particularly if they like me, and they like me as a person; they want to get to know me better, and so forth. They find it very difficult to understand why I don't have children, and why, as a married woman, in particular, I don't have children. And ... all right, that isn't something that, you know, may particularly come out -- but that deals with their expectations of me as a woman, and what it means to be a woman to them."

LEWIS: "Well what about outside the classroom -- let's say in high school -- how do women teachers relate to men in the faculty room? Are there separate faculty rooms? If they are together, you know, do men generally group together and women generally group together?"

TEACHER: "Uh huh. That's a good question because I think most of our high schools still have separate faculty rooms. I think the newer ones may have something different, and from what I've seen at the suburban schools, there isn't that same distinction. But the older schools were built with separate faculty rooms, and that's the way they remained. Not that a woman won't necessarily go into the men's faculty room -- although men very, very rarely come into the women's faculty room; it's very rare, and they usually knock first, and ask if it's okay."

TEACHER: "Yeah. You know, I was thinking when you were talking about the socializing of a couple of different incidents that I've been involved in. For instance, when I was student-teaching, that was at a junior high -- I was student-teaching with a male teacher, and I wasn't familiar with too many of the faculty, of course, so when we went into the lunchroom, I usually sat with him at his table, which was filled with men. And at the table there, the men, as a matter of course, would discuss sports -- and also tell dirty jokes. And it used to be a big thing -- they made a tremendous thing about the fact that I was at the table, even to such heights of ridiculousness as saying, 'Well, we have to go off now to tell this joke' -- and they'd go off to another table, and tell the joke, and they'd come back. It really got very silly."

BLAIR: Kathy Lewis of Member Station WBFO, Buffalo, New York, interviewing some women teachers from the Buffalo area. Sexism isn't only statistics and off-color jokes, however.

> TEACHER: "Last Spring, I was a teacher at Springarn High School in Washington, D.C., and I was raped by two young men."

MERROW: David Selvin prepared the following report.

SELVIN: Would it be fair to say that -- a lot of people are saying it -- that teaching is becoming a hazardous profession?

TEACHER: Uh ... in certain situations, because of the social milieu, which the schools find themselves in, yeah ... it is dangerous to a certain degree.

SELVIN: Some of the high schools I've been in have been locked -- there have been security guards in the hallways; I mean ... I don't remember that when I was in high school, and that was about 10 years ago. What do you think's happened in the meantime?

TEACHER: Well, I think that ... my feeling is that in the Sixties, there was a lot of anger which was getting out, and there's no avenue for outlet now, and I think there's a lot of repressed anger. I feel a lot of repressed anger on the part of the students, which makes them act out in different ways. They don't have any avenue for their frustrations.

SELVIN: You're still teaching?

TEACHER: Right.

SELVIN: What kind of a feeling exists when you go back after this happening?

TEACHER: Well, when I first talked to them ... I mean ... the whole; there was a whole out-reaching of people towards me because ... I imagine without any ego tripping, because of the kind of teacher I was, they were just very concerned, and a lot of them cried, and a lot of them got very upset -- that 'Why does it have to happen to somebody like that?' -- you know, which isn't, you know -- there's no logic to crime. So now, their reaction is they don't want to talk about it; they want to forget about it. They want me to forget about it.

SELVIN: Did you ever think when you were going to Teacher's College that this kind of a thing could ever happen?

TEACHER: Well, as I've said a lot of times before, it's ... you have to be pretty naive to teach in these public schools, or probably any large city public schools, and not realize that there is violence around you -- and that you can become the object of that violence for no reason at all, and ... I mean, I had considered the possibility like I consider the possibility living here, you know, walking over here tonight, I think, 'Now, should I walk -- or should I drive, or, you know -- are the streets stafe?' -- that kind of thing. So I considered the same thing in teaching, but ...

SELVIN: But somehow, schools always seem much more, you know, sacrosanct places.

TEACHER: Well, I think that people feel they are; in fact, I think they were much more outraged that if this happened to me as a teacher, than if I had been on the street, and it happened to me. I think people believe that, but that doesn't ... you know, they have become such open institutions, and such public institutions, that it can happen there as well as anywhere.

SELVIN: Let me ask you the first question again -- why are you still a teacher?

TEACHER: I know that before this happened, I was doing a good job, and was getting reactions and teaching, I guess, students the way I really felt that things were happening; things were gelling at long last with me in teaching -- and I had been at it six years. And I felt that this is one violent incident which would take some time in my psyche to get over, but if I pursued a suit against the individuals who

committed this crime,' that my anger could be pacified, or whatever. But I felt after I went back that that wasn't the case, and I mean, I didn't know that 'till I went back, and I guess I'm responsible enough or puritan ethic enough, or something, to feel that you shouldn't drop it all in the middle of a year -- and I'm doing some serious thinking now about not going back. I just ... the pressure's too much. I don't like looking over my shoulder, wondering if this person who I don't know is going to come at me with some weapon, or ... it's become a real burden.

MERROW: But not every teacher has such grim memories.

TEACHER: "And I can remember one little girl who really had great difficulty in reading, but she did have beautiful hands. So whenever I would sit beside her to try to help her, I would say, 'You know, your hands are really so beautiful!' And if you carry that out, I think, with children; let them know that they have something unique that you admired or that could be admired, that that sort of bolsters their ego. I'm a great one on the ego."

TEACHER: "I had the privilege one time of working with a child individually in a kindergarten classroom. She was going to go on to first grade, and she had never said anything at all for the whole year -- even on the playground or in her own classroom. And I was called in by the kindergarten teacher to see what placement that child should have, and why she didn't talk to her classmates or to her teacher. She would say 'yes' or 'no' by shaking her head. But she would not respond otherwise. And I worked with that child several times before I finally decided that -- found the teacher that I thought she would work best with, and the teacher's name was Helen Brunhouse at the Buchanan School. She was a marvelous teacher, and she told this little child, 'I will not push you in the swing until you say 'push me'.' And the child finally, after sitting in the swing for 3 days in a row, finally said, 'Push me.' And from that very beginning, the child grew, and by Christmas time, I had the joy of seeing her stand on the stage of the Buchanan School, with perhaps the whole school in the Assembly Hall, and that child sang <u>SILENT NIGHT</u>!"

BLAIR: Those teachers retired a few years ago, and shared their memories with David Selvin.

MERROW: When I was a kid, it seemed to me that teachers didn't have to do much work. We did all the work. Then, I became a teacher, and found out how much work it <u>really</u> is!

BLAIR: And that's why you're now in radio.

MERROW: Teachers are always being asked to do things that are above and beyond the call of duty.

TEACHER: "My wife teaches first grade, and she had 40 in her class in a room where I'm sure there was not even sufficient oxygen. Yet, with a hell of a lot of tears, and an awful lot of effort -- and quite frankly, many a late night, she was able to hold the line. Now, mind you, her hemmorhoids got worse, her vericose veins were, you know, were absolutely inflamed. She got crow's feet, and our marriage suffered tremendously -- but she was able to pull it off to some degree. But a short answer to your question is -- that is an exceedingly frustrating part of teaching, and more taxpayers ought to come to schools and spend a week or two in class. I don't mean just pop in, and say, 'Oh,

this is neat!' I mean, come in and sit in there for a week, and see what we're up against."

TEACHER: "I think that the job of teaching is much more difficult than most jobs because of the emotional demands. If you get involved with the students, it does take a lot of energy. And especially if you're working with the younger student -- each student wants some amount of individual reinforcement every day, and that takes a lot of energy."

TEACHER: "I recall one time having to go to school at 4:30 in the morning in order to line the playground with lime -- with a lime marker. And I was the physical ed teacher there at the Buchanan School, and I remember getting up, and being at school, and having all of those lines on the playground by 8:30 in the morning, and I had been there at 4:30 A.M. in order to accomplish it. And I got no additional pay for that at all."

"She was a big, tough woman - the first to come along,
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong ...
And though graduation meant that we had to part,
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart!

I wrote her name on my notepad, in an apron on my dress,
And I etched it on my locker, and I carved it on my desk.
And I painted big red hearts with her initials on my books ...
And I never knew 'till later why I got those funny looks.

She was a big, tough woman - the first to come along,
That showed me being female meant you still could be strong ...
And though graduation meant that we had to part,
She'll always be a player on the ballfield of my heart!"

BLAIR: Earlier, one teacher said that to be a good teacher, you need good students. Ah, but kids these days have changed.

MERROW: May'be we've changed, Wendy. Maybe they're doing the things we did when we were kids, and it's our attitudes and perceptions that are different.

TEACHER: "Well, one of the things that's really concerned me, especially in recent years, is the tendency of the students to have a disregard for personal integrity -- or at least, a very different definition than the kind of definition I had when I was growing up. I find a lot of cheating, and I try not to find it -- but sometimes it is very obvious. I find students trying to turn in work that is not their own, and represented as their own, or trying to say that they've turned in papers which they haven't turned in. And in many cases, these are not poor students -- these are better students who are doing these things; students that do not need to depend on outside devices in order to pass, or even make 'A's' in classes. And this really concerns me, and it is even more of a concern when you talk with the students, and they don't feel any guilt about this. They accept it as a normal procedure."

STUDENT: "Teachers are gonna have to learn to feel what

the students are. Because teachers like to have respect from students, but they don't like to give students respect that they deserve ... no ... so they always try to treat them as ... 'that they're just here, and as long as I get my money, I don't care if you learn or not -- as long as I get my money' -- so teachers -- they still got the wrong attitudes, too."

STUDENT: "I'm tellin' you, 'cause the way people be doin' nowadays, all they do is just become ... teachers come up to you, and they say such and such a thing, and they don't really explain the work or nothin' -- all they after, they get their check, they say, 'The hell with everybody!'"

TEACHER: "Children like discipline. They may rebel against it at the beginning, but if they know it is fair, children like limitations, and they will try a teacher until she imposes limitations. They have more respect for a teacher who has limitations -- who has discipline; in fact, I am thinking of this child who -- I worked in the room for one week, about a week ago, and there was a paddle on the bulletin board; pinned up to the bulletin board. It was a fifth grade class. They had taken a trip to the Amish country, and there are two boys who are -- unfortunately, rather disturbed, and they're quite a problem to the class. The teacher handles them beautifully. Frankly, I was a little worried, but it worked out all right. But the first day, one of the problem boys had gotten in trouble, and I had reprimanded him, very gently, very nicely. That wasn't enough. He went to the bulletin board and he brought down the paddle, and he said, 'Please -- use this on me!' I didn't!"

TEACHER: "If there is one complaint I have about the students at this institution, it is that they are too reticent and too passive. They dutifully write down in their notebooks the things that I say in class -- and I trust they write down in their notebooks the things that you say in your classes, also -- and that the primary difficulty with that is that it's very easy then to fall asleep as you lecture, in a sense. You don't face new questions, and you don't grow. As someone who is very interested in teaching, I've often maintained that teaching is just as stimulating, professionally, as researchers -- if you use it properly. But it requires the stimulation of the students to force you constantly to address new issues that you had never seen before. Much of my own writing comes out of questions that have occurred to me in class, prompted by students that raised issues that I had never seen before. And I would be less than honest if I were to maintain that I would have seen them eventually myself. I needed the students to show them to me, and then, I needed that occasion of being placed on the spot, right there, having to answer it -- figure out what the answer was."

TEACHER: "I know in the last ten years the mood of students everywhere has changed, as it has in the whole country. Everybody is just so -- you know, to use an overused expression -- really "turned off" and suspect and cynical -- of everything! They don't ... they know that because they ... comes ... it filters back down; that getting this high school education doesn't mean that much! When the unemployment rate for kids that are just a little bit older than them is 40-45% in Washington, why? You know? And so this cynicism and this repressed anger that doesn't

have any place to be directed now because there's really such a ... I mean, I think it's a real repressive period in terms of the government for minority groups -- gets directed towards the nearest source, which may, in fact, be teachers -- and the school, where they are forced to spend a lot of their time in -- and I know -- ridiculous courses, and things that don't have any relevance. And so, you know, I understand ... I can rationalize their feelings."

"Kids -- I don't know what's wrong with these kids today ...
Kids -- who can understand anything they say?
Kids -- they are disobedient, disrespectful oafs.
Noisy, crazy, sloppy, lazy loafers --
And while we're on the subject --

Kids -- You can talk and talk 'til your face is blue,
Kids -- but they still do just what they want to do.
Why can't they be like we were, perfect in every way!
What's the matter with kids today?

Kids -- I don't mind the moonlight swims; it's the loop-the-loop that hurts!
Kids -- How'll we ever beat the Russians?
Kids -- I didn't know what puberty was 'til I was almost passed it!
Laughing, singing, dancing, ringing morons -- and while we're on the subject ...

Kids -- they are just impossible to control ...
Kids -- with their awful clothes and their rock and roll!
Why can't they dress like we did --
What's wrong with Sammy Kaye?
What's the matter with kids today?"

("WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KIDS TODAY?" from BYE BYE BIRDIE)

MERROW: Next week, we'll be spending the day with a first grade teacher in Darien, Connecticut -- and a high school English teacher in Dallas, Texas.

"One repays a teacher poorly if one remains forever a student."

BLAIR: Some of the retired teachers heard on this program were Laura Carson, Louise Bradford, Elizabeth Griffith and Cathryn Baranack.

TEACHER: "When a student shows a gleam of understanding, or 'Oh yes!' -- the pieces of the puzzle of life are all fitting together, and then he might come up and say, 'Thank you -- you've done a lot for me.' That doesn't happen very often."

MERROW: The teachers in Maine included James Miller, David De Froscia, Richard Emerick, and Stephen Weber.

TEACHER: "I think just the interface with the students. That's my greatest joy in being a teacher -- having the students, and being able to talk with them and watch them grow and expand and get excited about what you have to offer if you have something exciting to offer, or when you do -- and that's the thing that I enjoy most about teaching."

BLAIR: And finally, you heard the opinions of Sam Proctor, Zachary

Clements, Fay Bacardi, Maxine Seller, Gail Kelly, Jill Salamone and Jay Porter.

TEACHER: "I guess I could say that I became a teacher because it was really the only avenue opened up. And through the years, really, in the beginning of my teaching career, there were other things that I thought I might have enjoyed more. But in retrospect, I wouldn't give anything for the years that I have spent with boys and girls, and with teachers with whom I worked -- and with the community people. It's been very rewarding, and whenever I see any of the children, any of the parents, any of the community people on the street, we just ... it's like old home week -- we're all so glad to see each other!"

MERROW: The people heard on this program appeared through the efforts of John Emery, Member Station WMEH, in Orono, Maine; David Ensor in Washington; Jay Baltezor in San Francisco; Kathy Lewis of Member Station WBFO in Buffalo, New York; Tim Cox in Washington; Jennifer Alt of Member Stations KHKE/KUNI, Ceadr Falls, Iowa; Lloyd Gite, Member Station KERA, Dallas, Texas -- and Judith Costello, WFBE, Flint, Michigan.

TEACHER: "I don't regret one minute of it. I have loved my teaching years. I feel that I have learned a lot; I would learn more from my students. If I had to go back and start again, I think I would be a much better teacher. I've learned so much! One of the rewarding things, after having taught 10 or 15 years, I would come across some of my parents at the store, and one of the most rewarding things was -- this parent said to me, 'Ellen's in Denver now, and she is a third grade teacher. She is a third grade teacher because you were her ideal when she was teaching, and this is why she went into it.' Well, that's reward enough for me!"

"Teacher's pet. I wanna be teacher's pet.
I wanna be huddled and cuddled as close to you as
I can get,
That's the lesson we're guessin' you're best in!

Teacher's pride. I wanna be teacher's pride.
I wanna be dated and rated the one most likely
at your side!
You got a burnin', yearnin' to learn!

I wanna learn all your lips can teach me,
One kiss will do right for starts!
I'm sure with a little homework, I'll graduate
to your heart!

Teacher's pet. I wanna be teacher's pet ..."

("TEACHER'S PET" sung by DORIS DAY)

BLAIR: Stay tuned to OPTIONS IN EDUCATION next week when we'll continue our three-part series on teachers.

MERROW: If you'd like transcripts of the three-part series, send 75¢ to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. A set of 3 cassettes cost $10.00. Please ask for Programs number 62, 63, 64 -- and please tell us the call letters of your NPR station.

BLAIR: The address again. National Public Radio - Education, Washington,

D.C 20036. The set of transcripts, 75¢ -- the cassettes, $10.00, and ask for Programs 62, 63 and 64.

MERROW: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University. Principal support is provided by the National Institute of Education. Additional funds are provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

BLAIR: This program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Assistant Producer is David Selvin. Production Assistant -- Joan Friedenberg. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. I'm Wendy Blair.

"And I know what a scene you were learnin' in,
Was there something that made you come back again?
Then what could ever lead you - what could ever lead you?
Back here where we need you -- back here where we need you?
Well, we tease him a lot 'cause we got him on the spot ... welcome back.
Welcome back, welcome back, welcome back ...
Welcome back, welcome back ...
Yea, we tease him a lot --
Welcome back, welcome back ...
'Cause we got him on the spot -
Welcome back, welcome back ...
Yea, we tease him a lot, 'cause we got him on the spot,
Welcome back.
Welcome back, welcome back, welcome back --
Welcome back, welcome back, welcome back!"

(THEME FROM "WELCOME BACK KOTTER")

MERROW: This is NPR - National Public Radio.